CONROY BAKER
UK Immigration Lawyers

UK Sponsor Licence Application

A complete guide for UK employers looking to recruit skilled workers from overseas. Find out who needs a licence, how to apply, and what it takes to stay compliant.

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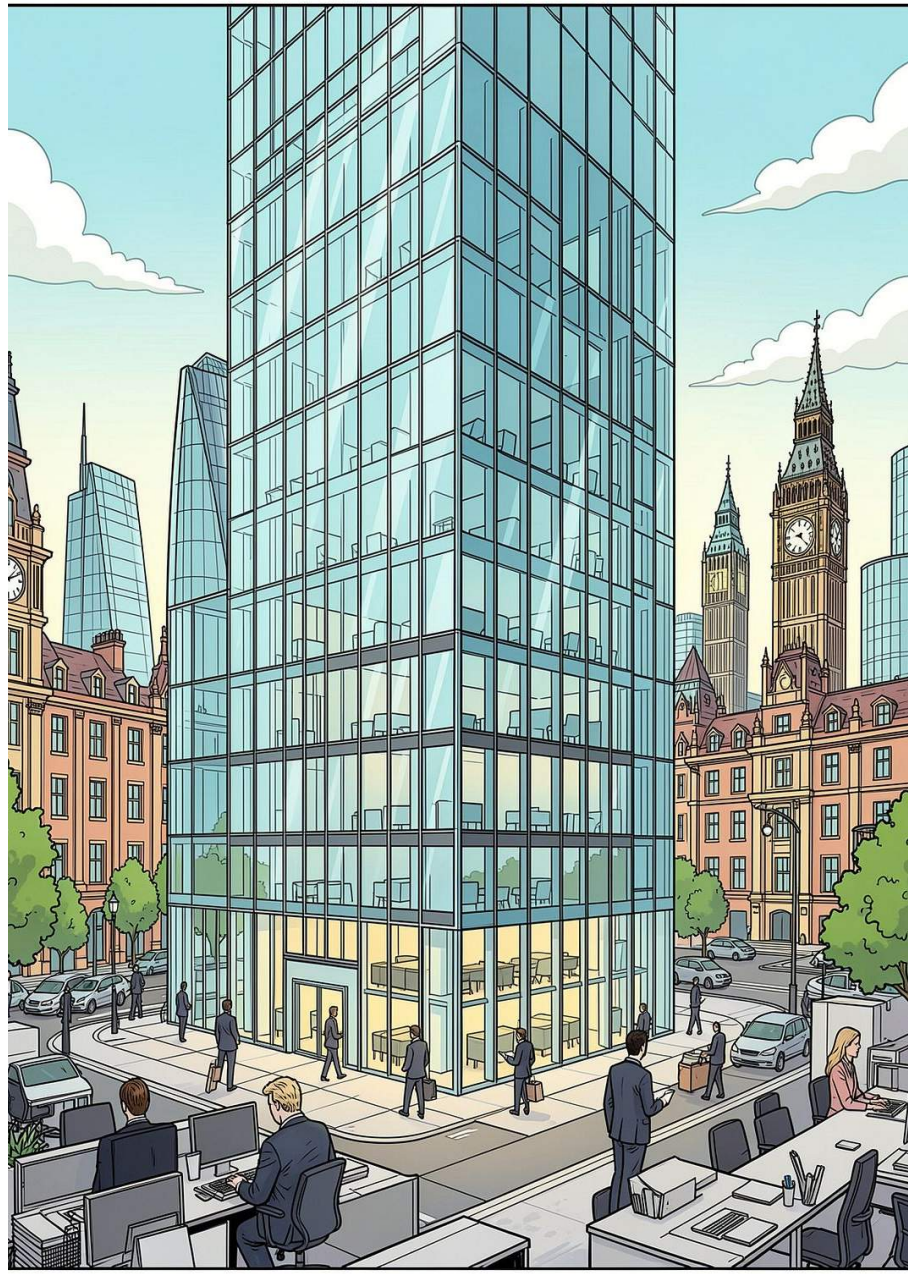


What Is a UK Sponsor Licence?

A Sponsor Licence gives an eligible UK organisation permission to sponsor overseas workers under approved immigration routes. It is required when recruiting workers who need sponsorship to work in the UK.

A Sponsor Licence does not automatically guarantee that a sponsored worker will receive a visa.

Recruit international talent

Access skilled workers from across the globe

Grow your workforce

Fill roles through approved immigration routes

Manage via SMS

Oversee sponsorship through the Sponsor Management System

Does Your Business Need a Sponsor Licence?

You will generally need a licence if you plan to employ overseas workers who require sponsorship to work in the UK.

You likely need one if...

- Recruiting skilled international employees
- Expanding your UK workforce
- Transferring eligible workers under relevant routes
- Sponsoring workers already in the UK where required

You may not need one for...

- British or Irish citizens
- Those with settled or pre-settled status
- People with Indefinite Leave to Remain
- Individuals with existing permission to work

Is Your Business Eligible?

UKVI assesses whether your organisation is genuine, operating lawfully, and capable of meeting sponsor duties. Preparation before applying can help reduce avoidable problems.

What UKVI looks for

UKVI may review your application, documents, and business operations before making a decision. Demonstrating readiness across these areas strengthens your application and reduces the risk of delays or refusal.

Who Manages Your Sponsor Licence?

Your business must nominate suitable Key Personnel to manage sponsorship. The same person may perform more than one role, provided they meet the relevant requirements.

Authorising Officer

Responsible for the organisation's overall sponsorship activity and compliance

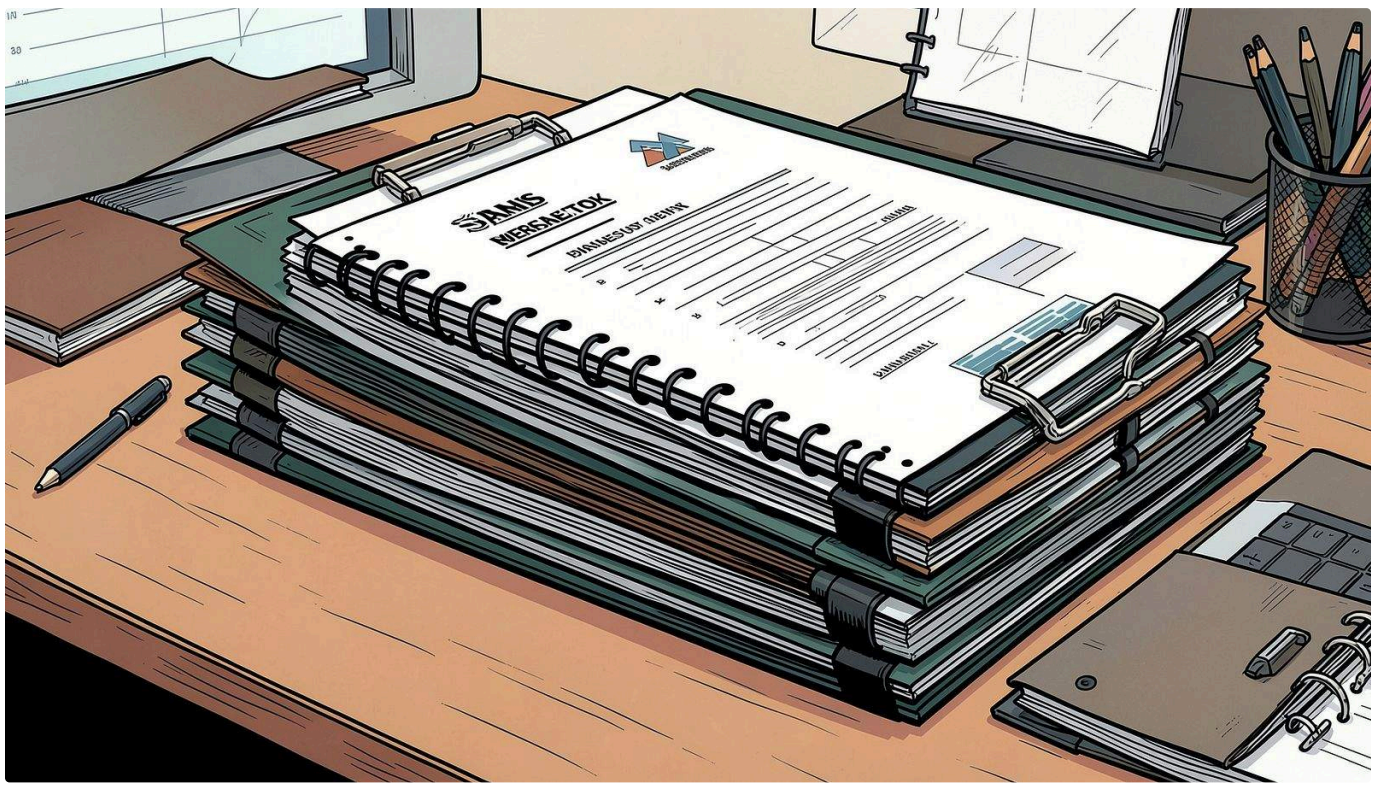
Key Contact

Acts as the main point of contact between your organisation and UKVI

Level 1 User

Handles day-to-day Sponsor Management System (SMS) activities

Documents You May Need



Supporting evidence is a critical part of your application. Depending on your organisation and the routes selected, UKVI may require documents showing your business is genuine and eligible.

Always review the latest Appendix A requirements before submitting. Incomplete or incorrect evidence can cause delays or lead to refusal.

- Company & registration information
- Evidence of business activity
- Financial or trading records
- Premises information
- Employer & HR records
- Route-specific supporting evidence

How to Apply: Step-by-Step

The application process follows a clear sequence. Careful preparation at each stage helps ensure a smooth and successful outcome.

01

Check eligibility

Confirm your organisation and proposed roles meet the requirements

02

Choose your routes

Select the Worker and/or Temporary Worker routes relevant to your business

03

Appoint Key Personnel

Nominate your Authorising Officer, Key Contact, and Level 1 User

04

Prepare documents

Gather all required supporting evidence

05

Apply online

Complete the UKVI application and pay the applicable fee

06

Submit supporting evidence

Provide documents within the specified timeframe

Sponsor Licence Fees & Decision Times

Current Worker Licence Fees

Fees are subject to change — always check the latest GOV.UK information before applying.

Processing Times

Standard service

Most applications are decided in under 8 weeks

Business visits

UKVI may visit your premises before making a decision

Expedited service

May be available for eligible applications, subject to an additional fee

£611

Small or charitable sponsor

£1,682

Medium or large sponsor

Your Responsibilities Don't End After Approval

Once your Sponsor Licence is granted, your organisation must continue meeting sponsor duties. Non-compliance can result in downgrading or revocation of your licence.

Maintain accurate records

Keep detailed records for all sponsored workers

Monitor employees

Track attendance and report absences to UKVI

Report changes

Notify UKVI of relevant changes in circumstances

Right-to-work checks

Carry out and record all required checks

Need Help With Your Sponsor Licence?

Our UK immigration team can assist with sponsor licence strategy, application preparation, and ongoing compliance guidance. Let us support your business through every stage of the process.

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Book Your Consultation Now